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ABSTRACT

The author asserts that school principals are increasingly becoming targets for a number of pressure groups advocating change in the school system, and that foremost among these groups are the faculties which the principals have striven to lead. Teacher militants are challenging administrative procedures and policies, demanding a right to be involved in policy formulation and implementation and developing strategies for collective negotiations. With a case study demonstrating the implications of the negotiation process for the role of the school principal, the author examines the experiences of principals in New York City where one recently stated goal of the AFT is that of the elimination of the school principalship and all supervisory positions. The author contends that the inference to be drawn in this case is that principals need to develop a strategy for utilizing the negotiation process advantageously for the sake of their very survival. The author feels that to succeed in educational management in coming years, principals must adopt a creative approach and a new awareness of and skills in human relations. (Author/WM)

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A MIDDLE MANAGEMENT DILEMMA

by

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THE SCHOOL PRINCIPAL AND NEGOTIATIONS: A MIDDLE MANAGEMENT DILEMMA

The Dilemma

School principals have found themselves fast becoming targets for a number of pressure groups advocating change in the school system. Foremost of these pressure groups are the faculties which the principals have striven to lead. They are challenging administrative procedures and policies and demanding a right to be involved in their formulation and implementation. The principal's authority, as well as his prestige and leadership, has not only been challenged but amazingly diminished.

The school principal, in some instances, can liken his situation to that of Charlie Brown, the Charles Schulz comic strip character. Charlie's leadership lacks support and is widely criticized. He stands confused when other members of the gang meet and reach decisions without including him. On special situations they allow him to attend club meetings. If the team loses or things go wrong, it's Charlie Brown's fault.

Most administrators are beyond the stage of wondering how they got into this position and are now considering ways to get out of it. To a large extent they have blamed increasing teacher militancy and have failed to consider the inappropriateness of their own operating strategies.

The principal has often found himself caught up in an organizational framework that limits his effectiveness. The rapid increase in suburban school size has resulted in a decrease in adequate communication between faculty and administrators. An increasing number of functions has taken

the principal away from his prescribed role of instructional leader. In addition, it can be said that administrators have not been good listeners, nor have they provided for faculty interaction or involvement in decision-making.

Lloyd Michael lists the following factors which limit the effectiveness of the secondary school principal: (15)

1. Everyday "line" problems and emergencies prevent him from functioning as an effective leader of his faculty.
2. Increasing specialization and diversification of the teaching task preclude any one educator from becoming a supervisor of all subjects at all levels for all categories of learners.
3. Inadequate budgets, bureaucratic restrictions, inferior facilities, and school system inertia.
4. Opposition to change based on scheduling difficulties, apathy, or lack of involvement.

Michael indicates that the greatest problem facing the secondary school principal in his attempt to fulfill his role as an instructional leader and manager of change is his precarious and frequently untenable position caused by the schism developing among teachers, boards of education, and chief school administrators. (15)

It can also be assumed that ineffective principals are largely responsible for teacher militancy. Before this assumption is made, however, teacher militancy in a larger context must be examined. Corwin indicates that "militancy has become a common response to pervasive sociological tensions and a generic symptom of the failure of existing social institutions." (3) He stresses that teacher militancy must be understood in this context. Educational bureaucracies are not working very effectively, according to Corwin. People will not feel constrained

to accept the authority of a system that fails to come to grips with the pressing problems of the day, nor obliged to administrators who fail to cope with the ailments of their occupation. Most existing systems do not give adequate recognition to the increased influence of teachers and offer few viable ways by which they can resolve their grievances within the existing authority structure.

In a study of staff conflicts in the public schools Corwin reports that the most frequent type of conflict identified (one in four) concerned authority problems between teachers and administrators. The instability of the authority structure was reported to increase in relationship to a school's size, number of levels of authority, degree of specialization, and its overall complexity. (3)

Various publications offer a variety of opinions on the causes of teacher militancy. Extreme points of view are that teacher unrest is part of a world-wide uprising of disaffected people as opposed to teacher unrest as a logical extension of the organized labor movement. The most frequently mentioned causes include: (1) mediocre salaries and poor working conditions, (2) increased percentage of males and the lowered average age of teachers, (3) trend toward consolidation of school districts resulting in larger administrative units, (4) prevalence of theories of democratic administrations, (5) new enabling legislation for public employees, (6) response of professional teachers' organizations to union efforts to organize white-collar workers.

This latter cause has been clearly demonstrated by the more militant stance of the National Education Association as a result of their rivalry

with the American Federation of Teachers. The Union's contribution to this movement has been described by Lieberman and Moskow. (13) Concerned with union membership decline in the 1950's, Walter Reuther and the AFL-CIO had hoped to achieve an organizational breakthrough among white-collar and professional workers. Their opportunity came in December of 1961 when the New York City School System voted for a bargaining representative. Recognizing this as the largest election ever to choose a bargaining agent by white collar workers, the AFL-CIO gave active financial support to the AFT. Over $120,000 was contributed by union sources. Following that important victory by AFT, the AFL-CIO has continued to provide substantial assistance to the AFT's campaign to organize public school teachers. (13)

The NEA represents about one-half of this country's two million public school teachers. While the AFT has grown more rapidly than the NEA in recent years, it speaks for only an approximated seven percent of all teaching personnel. It must be noted that the seven percent is located in cities friendly to unions. New York, Washington, D. C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, Boston, Chicago, Gary, Detroit, and Cleveland all have agreements granting the AFT the exclusive right to bargain for the city's teachers. (13)

The rise of teacher militancy along with the impact of union tactics has fostered the strategy for collective negotiations in education. Page one of the NEA Guidelines for Professional Negotiations provides this definition of the process:

> Professional negotiation is a set of procedures, written and officially adopted by the local association and the school board, which provides an orderly method for the school board and the local association to negotiate, through professional channels, on matters of mutual concern, to reach agreement on these matters, and to establish educational channels for mediation and appeal in the event of impasse. (1)

This process has spread rapidly across the country and will continue to do so. It is an effective process. Teacher groups have been able to gain concessions and achieve goals that fifty years of traditional activities and channels have not been able to provide. Administrators and school board members cannot reject or ignore the requests and demands of teacher groups. The collective negotiation process creates pressures that force boards and administrators to listen and respond.

To the extent that the negotiation process has enhanced the role of the teacher, it has altered the role of the principal. The principal is facing essentially the same dilemma as the industrial supervisor or middle manager. Middle management once played a crucial role in maintaining an efficient and productive operation but stood by helplessly as new relationships between labor and management were carved out at the bargaining table without them. Their positions and salary were jeopardized. High school principals appear to be facing the same consequence.

In a Phi Delta Kappan article, Wildman and Perry comment that it was the school principal who stood to lose freedom when negotiations included certain areas of administrative discretion. They referred especially to bargaining on matters of class size; the extent to which seniority is to be used as a criterion for assignment to classes, promotions, and transfers; transfer policies in general; the distribution of teaching and non-teaching assignments; and the length of the teaching day. (18)

Lutz, Kleinman, and Evans are much more direct. The principal is the ". . . one who (1) operates from a powerless base, (2) has been stripped of most of his leadership roles by the central administration, and (3) does not participate in most of the decision-making that affects his building staff." Furthermore, "he is out of the main stream of the organizational line, being neither a part of the administrative oligarchy, nor teacher collectivity." (14)

A Case in Point

The implications of the negotiation process for the role of the principal can be more clearly seen by examining a school system that has felt the impact of unionism.

Alexander Taffel, principal of Bronx High School of Science, New York City, in 1967/68 describes the ramifications of negotiations for the New York City principals. (16) He indicates that the introduction of trade unionism in teacher-school board relations brought a marked change in the position of all school supervisors in New York City and especially in the position of the school principal.

Demands of the teacher union moved rapidly from salaries and class size to limiting, reducing, and eliminating some of the principal's authority and power. The principals were never included in the negotiations in which they were at issue. The school board failed to identify the principal's responsibility and authority to run the school. They yielded concessions that undercut and weakened his position. Results of

negotiations were beneficial for the school as well as the teacher--increases in salary, smaller class sizes, introduction of aides, and greater public recognition and respect, all of which resulted in improved teacher morale.

At the same time, according to Taffel, "the introduction of a militant teacher ideology into school relationships produced a regrettable separation between the principal and his staff." The principal became a boss and according to the union's image of supervisors, they were "martinets, authoritarians, and petty tyrants." The school board, however, saw the principal as an administrative and supervisory employee charged to carry out its policy. They did not see him as a boss. The principal was excluded from the actual bargaining sessions. He often learned that some of his essential powers had been traded away after the contract had been made public. The principal's right to deploy teaching personnel in accordance with his best professional judgment was curtailed through the adoption of a union contract with a policy of rotation. Non-teaching assignments for which the teacher receives compensatory time were not to exceed six years. The same applied to special teaching assignments. The ramifications of this policy, in particular, were far-reaching as it affected counselors, deans, and department chairmen. It has become increasingly difficult to find qualified persons for these temporary positions, according to Taffel.

The new transfer policy was also difficult to cope with. Every school was obligated to release and to accept teachers on transfer in accordance with a prescribed formula. This benefited the teacher by not

freezing them in an undesirable school. For the principal it had two bad features. It encouraged the departure of experienced personnel from troubled schools and it compelled a principal to accept a transferring teacher regardless of the quality of previous service.

The New York principals also found themselves faced with an inequity in the grievance procedure. This important aspect of the union contract provides for the right of confrontation and appeal for the individual teacher or groups of teachers when they have a grievance. Under the terms of the new contract, the principal had no right to appeal in the case of an adverse decision. The range of topics for consultation (the initial conference in the grievance process) covers every aspect of school life and consumes a great deal of the principal's time.

The New York principals were also placed in complicated circumstances when school boards agreed to abolish or limit an assignment carried out by teachers but made no provisions for an alternative way of accomplishing the task. The last union contract in New York City freed teachers from the clerical work needed to follow up student absence and truancy but did not provide for any other way of getting the job done. The confusion that resulted is obvious.

One of the recently stated goals of the AFT in New York City is the complete elimination of the position of school principal and of all other supervisory personnel. They would be replaced by officers elected by the teachers with no salary differential involved.

The case of the New York principals is important to all school administrators because it is typical of the union pattern in other major cities. It also stresses the need for principals to develop a strategy to utilize the negotiation process to their advantage. If they don't, it is obvious that they will fast phase out as educational leaders.

The Principal's Role in Negotiation

In writing about the impact of collective negotiations, Lieberman predicts disastrous consequences for school managers in the adversary process of negotiations unless they strengthen their own resources to deal with the process. Lieberman believes that education must remain a cooperative enterprise of teachers, supervisors, administrators, and boards of education. He believes that one way to guarantee this cooperation is through the proper use of the negotiation process by each of these groups. (12) The challenge for the high school principal, then, is to determine the proper strategy for the negotiation process as well as the overall operation of the high school.

Operational Strategy

The principal must start with a careful appraisal of himself and his own ego involvement. Some principals are not prepared and perhaps will not be able to operate from a powerless base. Cunningham reports from interviews with principals that there are two extreme points of view regarding teacher militancy. (4) For some, there is little desire to shift the control structure of education; they are the boss and will make

decisions. For this type of principal, teacher militancy and negotiations are a threat. At the other extreme are the principals who believe that contracts developed by negotiation can expand their role. They feel their attention can be focused on more important aspects of educational leadership. These principals possess considerable faith in the professional integrity and general competency of teachers. This positive approach to negotiations appears to be the one to which the successful principal will adhere.

There are several types of strategies that can be, or have been, employed by principals. Erickson, in writing of the principalship and his image, alludes to six types. They are as follows:

"Housekeeper" - He has a smoothly operating building, details are cared for, and the premises are neat and clean. Teacher negotiations would not upset this type.

"Daddy" - The teacher's protector, the man standing between the teacher and the community. This type would be shattered by collective action because his teachers would no longer need his protection.

"Superteacher" - The experienced, effective teacher as a principal who passes on all of his secrets to those with whom he associates. This approach would be incompatible with teacher militancy.

"Change Agent" - Expected to keep his school abreast of current developments, this principal is knowledgeable about new things occurring through all of education and trying to implement or incorporate as many new ideas into his school as possible. This type of principal should be successful in accommodating collective action. To be effective in achieving innovations, the change agent must have already developed considerable finesse in diagnosing his work setting.

"Systems Analyst" - An advanced definition of the principal's role. This principal would understand how organizations behave and would perfect feedback mechanisms to assist him with administrative decision-making. He would also incorporate teacher participation into a rational model of administrative performance. Negotiations would not be threatening for this principal. (8)

These five examples identify two approaches that can be taken by the school administrator: the traditional, as seen in the first three examples; or the innovator, as seen in the last two examples. To succeed in educational management in the coming years, a creative approach appears to be absolutely essential. This approach must be coupled with a new awareness and skills in human relations.

In order to avoid complete neutralization of the principalship, English believes two things must occur. (7) First, principals must work for new organizational relationships with teachers in the decision-making process at the school level. They must be involved with their principals in the shaping of school policies, curriculum decisions, and mutual evaluation of colleagues. Second, differentiated staffing must be employed to release teachers to serve in varying capacities within the organization. According to English, differentiated staffing can dissolve much of the authoritarian superstructure and provide means for democratic participation. In this atmosphere the role of the principal changes to that of a skilled social manager where there is mutual professional respect between the participants, not the superior/subordinate relationship. Both of these positions place a tremendous emphasis on professional relationships. Perhaps the principal will be valued to the extent of his skills in interpersonal relationships.

His greatest responsibility may well be for the quality of professional relationships within the social system of the school. A major amount of his time may have to be spent on cultivating these relationships. There is no doubt that he will value his efforts in this area when he is faced with negotiations or with employee grievances.

Grievances

No matter how wise the operational strategy of the high school administrator, he will be faced with grievances. Charles Hilston, Director of Field Services, Professional Negotiations, NASSP, indicates that principals most often indicate resolution of employee grievances as their most persistent problem in administrating negotiated master agreements. (11) It is acknowledged that pressure is on the building principal to have as few formal grievances as possible and to resolve those that are filed at the local school. If relationships are not effective and communication channels are not open, employee representatives have direct access to higher levels. It therefore behooves the principal to operate in such a manner that he is effective in dealing with grievances. It is also important for the superintendent to assure the principal that he (the principal) will be the first contact in all grievances.

Kramer believes that formal grievance procedures are necessary in promoting good morale. Personnel should be permitted to express dissatisfaction and obtain adjustments in a fair and impartial setting. Opportunities should be provided to release accumulated discontent in an atmosphere of reasonable discussion. According to Kramer, grievance

procedures are designed to improve administrative practice by promoting a balance between protecting the authority of the principal and other administrators and preventing abuse of this authority. (11)

Certain guidelines are recommended for the approach to grievance cases. They are as follows:

1. Formal grievances should be presented in writing so that they can be carefully studied.
2. An employee association committee should screen grievances.
3. The principal should have witnesses if necessary.
4. Teachers and administrators should be protected against reprisals arising from participation in grievance cases.
5. Procedures should provide opportunities for the administrator as well as the teacher to protest practices that are in violation of the agreement. (11)

Kramer also offers some guidelines for the principal in facilitating his role with the grievance procedure. They include:

1. Taking time to decide; impulsive reactions should not be allowed to dictate immediate responses.
2. Avoid unnecessary written explanations.
3. Consistency and impartiality are essential. All principals within a school district should reach common understanding concerning interpretations.
4. Be able to document teacher ratings. Approved practices for evaluation and appraisal of teaching must be followed.
5. Continuous communication between central office and principal is crucial.
6. Maintain a permanent record of all grievance cases. (11)

Kramer emphasizes the evaluation aspect in particular. The majority of grievance complaints appear to fall into the category of the teacher's

dissatisfaction with evaluation. Perhaps this aspect of the grievance procedure will motivate principals to re-evaluate their total approach to supervision. If not, this responsibility might well be negotiated out of their hands.

The grievance process will be difficult for some principals to implement. Most principals, however, will see it as a positive step in minimizing problems and assuring direct communication of complaints.

Organizational Membership

Principals must also consider the several alternatives they have toward representation in the local negotiation structure. These alternatives appear to include:

1. Membership in the teacher organization.
2. Membership in a separate administrators' organization.
3. Non-participation in the negotiation process.

Carr (1) and Epstein (9), speaking of the role of the principal in professional negotiation strongly indicate that he should be involved in the teachers' organization and in the negotiation process. The purpose of professional negotiations is to enlarge the participation of all teachers, not to limit administration participation. Carr stresses that "principals must not be spectators when decisions are made about the course of education. They belong with their colleagues, in their professional associations." (1) Epstein states:

> NASSP members have every right and privilege to comment on and criticize the program and activities of any and every organization which seeks to affect the policies and practices of public education. Principals and administrators will not waive that right because of the specious argument that this may subject teachers to unfair pressures. (9)

The alternative to membership in the teachers' organization is the formation of a supervisors' or administrators' organization which would be recognized by the school board and have the power to represent all administrators in the negotiation process.

As NEA organizations become more militant, they are forcing administrators into their own organizations. Principals from many large school districts have reported positive results from their concerted efforts in establishing collective strategy for dealing with teacher demands. This type of organization appears to hold much potential influence, provided that members direct their efforts at the total educational program and not just toward the advancement of their own cause. This organization would offer an excellent vehicle for furthering administrative inservice training, research, and public relations.

The school board cannot dismiss a representative administrative voice. The New York principals have established this as fact. They indicate an improvement in their plight since forming their own organization. The school board has suddenly become aware of the principals' position. Taffel indicates that their principals' organization has become a forceful negotiating agent as well as a creative professional association. (16)

At the recently completed NASSP convention, speaker Benjamin Epstein, chairman of NASSP's committee on the status and welfare of the secondary school principal, stressed the importance of the principal's being involved in the writing of negotiation legislation. Epstein's recommended criteria for desirable state laws included the following that were applicable to the principal:

1. Differentiation of teacher and administrator-supervisor categories.
2. Recognition of administrator-supervisor negotiation councils on a basis similar to teacher organizations.
3. Principals to have the right to negotiate for themselves and to participate in board negotiations with teachers.

He emphasized that it was most important for principals to be guaranteed the right to bargain for themselves and to take part in the general negotiations.

Conclusion

The majority of school administrators have come to accept the fact that they can no longer operate as they used to. Their role has changed and is, in fact, still changing. Their concern might well be with who is directing the change. Some principals can see the shambles and conclude that their job is being bargained away. When they recognize that the power devices for manipulating people are no longer available, they might even decide that they can no longer function in the principal's role.

Others, however, might look about and recognize fantastic opportunities for progress within the educational enterprise. The principal who adheres to this positive approach will most likely be successful. He will be recognized for his technical and human relations ability. He will be willing to listen and to consider the possibilities and progress that arise from problems. This principal will plan to work at the strategy table rather than the bargaining table. He will deal with teacher militancy with an increasing amount of sensitivity and creativity. He

will involve his staff in developing instructional objectives, educational policy, and evaluation procedures.

The challenge of the principalship of today's schools is far-reaching. The individual administrator, the school organization, and the institutions of higher learning are all involved. Perhaps the colleges and universities with graduate programs in educational administration face the greatest challenge. These programs must be designed to reach persons of all levels of administrative background from the prospective candidate to the veteran of 20 years. An effective program will be one that encompasses all aspects of administrative technology and personal skills. The institutions will be judged, to a large extent, by the manner in which their graduates move into the field with the ability to facilitate a new approach in school administration.

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